



TROOPS IN ACTION

Lisa Meincke of Arlington Heights prepares herself to receive her first COVID-19 vaccination administered by National Guard personal Erika O'Meara of Scott Air Force base at Triton College, Wednesday, Feb. 3, 2021, in River Grove, Ill.

Associated Press

Pentagon deploys troops to fuel COVID-19 vaccine drive

By LOLITA C. BALDOR and RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Pentagon will deploy more than 1,100 troops to five vaccination centers in what will be the first wave of increased military support for the White House campaign to get more Americans inoculated

against COVID-19.

President Joe Biden has called for setting up 100 mass vaccination centers around the country within a month. One of the five new military teams will go to a vaccination center opening in California. Other centers are expected to be announced soon.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency

has asked the Pentagon to supply as many as 10,000 service members to staff 100 centers. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin approved the initial five teams, but the others will be approved in separate tranches as FEMA identifies the other site locations.

Continued on next page

SUPER Do it Center
Bo Familia Pa Semper!
Weekly SPECIALS

SAVE \$2.63



\$5.71
Each

Strawberries Fresh 1LB

SAVE \$2.29



\$9.66
Per KG

Angus Beef Sausage

SAVE \$1.72



\$12.57
Per KG

All Natural Colby Jack

SAVE \$0.43



\$3.42
Each

Nestle Coffee Mate Original 400gr

*Offer is valid from 5 - 11 Feb 2021 and while supplies last. All prices are in US dollars (\$)



National Guard members work the line of people at Triton College in River Grove, Ill., Wednesday, Feb. 3, 2021, on opening day for mass vaccinations sponsored by the Cook County Department of Public Health.

Associated Press

Continued from Front

Acting FEMA Administrator Robert Fenton told reporters that two vaccination sites that will be "predominantly" federally run will open in California on Feb. 16, one at California State University, Los Angeles, and the other in Oakland.

Military troops will staff one of the two California centers, FEMA and Pentagon officials said. Personnel from other parts of the federal government will be at the other one. More sites will open around the country as more doses of vaccine become available.

The military deployment comes as the nation is in a race against a virus that is spawning mutations which may make it spread more easily and inflict deadlier disease. Only about 2% of Americans have received the required two-dose vaccination regimen that confers optimum protection with the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines currently available. To reach widespread, or "herd" immunity, the U.S. must vaccinate 70% to 85% of its population, according to Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government's top infectious disease expert.

That would be roughly 230 million to 280 million people, compared to 6.9 million who are currently fully immunized with two shots.

More help could be on the way soon. Johnson & Johnson announced this week it is seeking emergency use authorization from the Food and Drug Administration for its vaccine, which requires only

one shot.

Each of the Pentagon's five military teams includes 222 personnel, including 80 who will give the vaccines, as well as nurses and other support staff. The teams would be able to provide about 6,000 shots a day.

The five teams represent a growing use of the active duty military to a vaccination campaign that already involves nearly 100 National Guard teams in 29 states across the country. National Guard leaders told The Associated Press that they are now considering training additional Guard members to give shots, so that they can also expand vaccinations in more remote and rural portions of their states.

Gen. Dan Hokanson, chief of the National Guard Bureau, said the Guard has the ability to field about 200 additional teams. Training other medical personnel to give the vaccination shots, he said, would potentially provide more.

"If we reach the point where we've fully implemented all of our folks who can (give shots), then they're looking at potential training opportunities if we're going to need more than that," said Hokanson. "We're going to do everything to make a difference and meet whatever that need is."

The Pentagon has said that the FEMA teams could be a mix of active duty, National Guard and Reserves. But Hokanson and Maj. Gen. Jerry Fenwick, director of the Guard's Office of the Joint Surgeon,

said that at this point, the FEMA teams are more likely going to be filled largely by active duty troops. The Guard, they said, will probably be tapped by their governors for use in their own states. are more likely to be used in remote, rural locations. Guard leaders said the close to 100 mobile vaccination teams already active are delivering more than 50,000 shots a day. "As more vaccines come on line, there's surely going to be more demand for vaccinators," said Fenwick.

Pentagon officials have made it clear that they are being careful about tapping National Guard and Reserves, because in many cases those service members are already working in medical jobs in their civilian lives at local hospitals and medical centers. Hokanson noted that while the Guard could staff as many as 600 vaccine teams, he has to cut that number about in half because of those types of civilian job restrictions.

He said that so far Guard members are only operating in their own states, but could go to neighboring states if needed in the future, as long as they have enough teams. Biden has compared the campaign against COVID-19 to a war. Alongside the troop deployment, he also invoked a Cold War-era law called the Defense Production Act to help bolster manufacturing of vaccines, at-home COVID-19 testing kits and nitrile gloves used by health care workers and vacci-

nators. Referred to as the DPA, the law in essence allows the government to assign missions to private companies during national emergencies.

Tim Manning, the White House's COVID-19 supply coordinator, said Friday the administration was looking to help drugmaker Pfizer clear a bottleneck around fill-and-finish capabilities with vaccine production by giving the drugmaker first priority to access needed supplies. Manning said also said the government is investing in six manufacturers to develop at-home and point-of-care COVID-19 tests, with the goal of producing 60 million tests by the end of the summer. Earlier in the week, the White House announced a \$230 million contract with Ellume, manufacturer of an at-home test approved by the Food and Drug Administration. No prescription is required for the over-the-counter test.

"The country is well behind where we need to be in testing," said Manning. Due to contract issues, he said he could not yet reveal the names of the companies.

Another round of contracts will build capacity to produce surgical gloves in the U.S., including processing the raw materials for the gloves. There were widespread shortages at the start of the pandemic last year.

Manning said the goal is to produce more than 1 billion nitrile gloves domestically by the end of this year. □

Coronavirus cases drop at U.S. homes for elderly and infirm

By JAY REEVES

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) —

Coronavirus cases have dropped at U.S. nursing homes and other long-term care facilities over the past few weeks, offering a glimmer of hope that health officials attribute to the start of vaccinations, an easing of the post-holiday surge and better prevention, among other reasons.

More than 153,000 residents of the country's nursing homes and assisted living centers have died of COVID-19, accounting for 36% of the U.S. pandemic death toll, according to the COVID Tracking Project. Many of the roughly 2 million people who live at such facilities remain cut off from loved ones because of the risk of infection. The virus still kills thousands of them weekly.

The overall trend for long-term care residents is improving, though, with fewer new cases recorded and fewer facilities reporting outbreaks. Coupled with better figures for the country overall, it's cause for optimism even if it's too early to declare victory.

"We definitely think there's hope and there's light at the end of the tunnel," said Marty Wright, who heads a nursing home trade group in West Virginia.

Nursing homes have been a priority since vaccinations began in mid-December, and the federal government says 1.5 million long-term care residents have already received at least an initial dose.

Researchers and industry leaders say they are seeing marked improvements after months in which some nursing homes lost dozens of residents to the disease and had to keep others in semi-isolation for protection. Some 2,000 nursing homes are now virus-free, or about 13% nationally, according to an industry group, and many are dealing with far fewer cases than before.

In West Virginia, where about 30% of the state's roughly 2,080 COVID-19 deaths occurred at long-term care centers, fewer



Carmela Sileo, left, and Susan McEachern sit next to each other and talk in the dayroom Wednesday, Feb. 3, 2021, at Arbor Springs Health and Rehabilitation Center in Opelika, Ala.

Associated Press

outbreaks are happening and fewer residents are requiring hospitalization, said Wright, chief executive of the West Virginia Health Care Association. Pennsylvania-based Genesis HealthCare, which operates more than 325 nursing homes, assisted-living facilities or senior living communities in 24 states, has seen similar improvements, said spokeswoman Lori Mayer. The American Health Care Association and National Center for Assisted Living, an industry trade organization, said Thursday that data from about 800 nursing homes where initial vaccine doses were administered in late December offered promising results. Cases among residents fell by 48% at homes where immunizations had occurred, compared to a 21% decline at non-vaccinated facilities nearby. Meanwhile, cases among employees dropped by 33% at vaccinated homes, compared to 18% at non-vaccinated facilities.

After reaching a high of almost 73,600 new weekly cases in long-term care facilities nationwide in mid-December, the number was down 31% by late January, to about 50,000 new cases per week, an Associated Press analysis found. Still, the most recent weekly count is 18% higher

than the seven-day period that ended on Thanksgiving, when numbers started climbing.

The weekly count of new deaths remains stubbornly high, with a record 7,042 recorded during the seven-day span that ended Jan. 14 and only a slight decline since. By comparison, for the seven days that ended on Thanksgiving, 3,181 deaths were recorded. More encouragingly, the COVID Tracking Project found that only 251 facilities reported new outbreaks recently, compared to 1,410 in early January.

Dr. David Gifford, chief medical officer for the national association, said the numbers show signs for hope since they indicate vaccines might decrease the spread of COVID-19, a finding not shown in trials. "If verified with additional data, this could expedite the reopening of long-term care facilities to visitors, which is vital to residents' health and wellbeing," he said in a statement.

Experts caution that only

some of the improvement can be linked to vaccines. Studies from Israel show it takes a patient about 12 days for the first of the two-dose Pfizer or Moderna vaccines to provide meaningful protection, said Roni Rosenfeld, a computational epidemiologist who heads the Machine Learning Department at Carnegie Mellon University. Despite all the long-term care facility residents and workers who have received at least one dose of vaccine, those doses haven't had enough time to work for most people, he said this week.

"The vaccine likely contributed, but very, very little," said Rosenfeld.

Health officials say other factors are likely playing a larger role, including an ebb in the post-holiday surge, an ever-larger number of people who are immune because they've had the disease, behavioral changes and more abundant protective gear. And they caution that there are still threats lurking, including

more contagious strains of the virus and a reluctance by many nursing home workers to get vaccinated. At Arbor Springs Health and Rehabilitation Center in Opelika, Alabama, where 19 patients died of COVID-19 early in the pandemic, none of the roughly 115 patients are infected now, said Mark Traylor, who heads the facility's parent company, Traylor-Porter Healthcare.

"We look after each other in here. We take care of each other," resident Susan McEachern said Wednesday as she and a friend — both wearing masks — sat in a communal room that was recently reopened because many residents had been vaccinated.

Traylor said a better understanding of how to prevent the spread of the virus and how to treat COVID-19 was the difference between "looking into an abyss" during those first weeks of the crisis and visitors now being allowed back on a limited basis.

"We're going to be in great shape once we get everybody vaccinated," said Traylor.

PruittHealth, which operates about 100 nursing homes in the Carolinas, Georgia and Florida, has 29 locations that are free of COVID-19 and fewer patients overall testing positive in recent weeks, said CEO Neil Pruitt.

Although more than 70% of PruittHealth's eligible nursing home residents have been immunized, only 27% of its employees have agreed to be vaccinated, Pruitt said. Without a big improvement in that employee figure, he's worried cases could spike again once people start traveling over spring break.

"Right now, I'm not confident," he said. □



Virginia lawmakers pass marijuana legalization bills

By SARAH RANKIN and DENISE LAVOIE

Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) —

Both chambers of the Virginia General Assembly passed legislation Friday that would legalize marijuana for adult recreational use, with retail sales starting several years down the road.

Work on the complicated legislation has been a priority for Democrats who control state government. But the process is far from finished — there are substantial differences between the two chambers' bills that must be worked out before they can be sent to Gov. Ralph Northam, who could also seek to make additional changes.

"I think that Virginia is on a path to an equitable legalization plan for marijuana. There have been a few bumps, but I'm hopeful that we'll have a polished bill we can agree upon in the next few weeks," said Sen. Adam Ebbin, one of the chief patrons of that chamber's bill.

If the legislation is signed into law, Virginia would join 15 other states and the neighboring District of Columbia in legalizing small amounts of marijuana for



Sen. Adam Ebbin, D-Alexandria, presents SB1406, his bill legalizing marijuana, as debate continued on legislation during the floor session of the Virginia Senate inside the Science Museum of Virginia in Richmond, Va., Friday, Feb. 5, 2021.

Associated Press

adult recreational use, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

The House passed its version of the legislation on a 55-42 vote. The Senate advanced its bill 23-15.

Both chambers' measures would legalize possession of an ounce of marijuana or less for those 21 and older, though that provision has different start dates. Both bills would also start the process of expung-

ing some previous misdemeanor marijuana-related offenses, starting July 1. Both measures envision retail sales starting in 2024, overseen by a newly created regulatory entity. And both would use the biggest portion of the tax revenue from sales to fund pre-K for at-risk kids.

Among the differences between the two bills: the Senate version allows localities to opt out of allowing retail stores and it requires

a second vote by lawmakers next year to finalize the legal framework.

This year's push for legalization comes after the new Democratic majority at the General Assembly passed decriminalization legislation last year, making simple possession a civil penalty that can be punished by a fine of no more than \$25. Northam, also a Democrat, took a new position in November supporting legalization. He said there were many reasons why he changed his mind, including unequal punishments for marijuana-related crimes among people of color.

In his annual address to lawmakers last month, he said legalization would ensure Virginia is a "more just state that works better for everyone."

"We've done the research, and we can do this the right way, leading with social equity, public health, and public safety," Northam said at the time.

Law enforcement groups, religious advocacy groups and addiction prevention advocates have been among those opposed to the measure.

Regina Whitsett, executive director of Substance

Abuse Free Environment, Inc., said legalizing marijuana will increase the number of drug-impaired driving crashes and the use of marijuana among youth. The group is also concerned that edible marijuana products could get into the hands of young children and could result in accidental poisonings.

"It's really not marijuana legalization, it's marijuana commercialization they're trying to pass," Whitsett said.

Dana Schrad, executive director of the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police, said law enforcement officials are concerned that legalization will drive up use of marijuana overall and cause more impaired driving crashes.

"The issue of looking at this as a profit industry for Virginia is negated by health care costs, by impaired driving costs, by the fact that young people are exposed to this," Schrad said. "There are just a lot of other issues and costs that come from marijuana legalization."

Both versions of the legislation have safety provisions that deal with packaging, advertising and consumer education. □

Bronx Boosters: Yankee Stadium becomes mass vaccination site



People line up at a COVID-19 vaccination site at Yankee Stadium, Friday, Feb. 5, 2021, in the Bronx borough of New York.

Associated Press

By JOSEPH B. FREDERICK

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Yankee

Stadium was opened as a COVID-19 mass vaccination site Friday by officials trying to boost inoculation

rates in surrounding Bronx neighborhoods hard hit by the pandemic.

The megasite is being restricted to residents of the New York City borough with the highest percentage of

positive coronavirus test results. Mayor Bill de Blasio called it "a different kind of opening day" hours after a long line formed outside the stadium on a damp morning.

"This is about protecting people who need the most protection because the Bronx is one of the places that bore the brunt of this crisis of the coronavirus," he said at a stadium-side news conference. "The Bronx has suffered."

De Blasio, a Red Sox fan, donned a Yankees cap in gratitude to the team and declared himself a fan of Boston's archrival "for one day only."

The site established with help from the city and state has registered about 13,000 of the 15,000 appointments

available in its first week, officials said.

It will initially be open seven days a week, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Goldie Albergottie said it was a simple process of showing her identification and getting a shot.

"It's not so easy sometimes to get an appointment. I was registered around town and nobody called me," she said, but her doctor "was on the ball, and found out as soon as Yankee Stadium got the vaccine."

Not everyone had a smooth experience. Lawrence Francis, who was told to come 15 minutes before his appointment, was discouraged from getting a vaccine by a long wait.

"Look at this line, and it's

raining and it's cold and I'm elderly," he said. "So, you know, it's an issue."

Plans to provide COVID-19 inoculations at Yankee Stadium and Citi Field, the New York Mets' home in Queens, were delayed by a shortage of vaccine doses.

No opening day for vaccinations at Citi Field has been announced.

Officials encouraging people to get vaccinated enlisted former Yankees star relief pitcher Mariano Rivera to help. Appearing at the news conference with de Blasio, the Baseball Hall of Famer said he wanted the support the people who supported him for so many years.

"We saved so many games here," he said, "but now it's about saving lives." □

Trudeau tries to reassure Canadians vaccines are coming

By **ROB GILLIES**
Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — Prime Minister Justin Trudeau tried Friday to reassure Canadians his plan to vaccinate them is working despite mounting criticism his government is not getting vaccines soon enough. Trudeau said there is “a lot of anxiety and a lot of noise,” but said Canada is still on track to get 6 million doses of Pfizer and Moderna vaccines by the end of March and 20 million in the spring.

“We are very much on track,” Trudeau said.

Most countries around the world have been struggling to vaccinate people quickly. But Canadians are comparing their country to world-leading Israel and the neighboring U.S.

Both Pfizer and Moderna have cut the number of doses Canada expected to get thus far, but Trudeau says he still expects to get 4 million doses from Pfizer and 2 million from Moderna by the end of March.

Trudeau said they are still very much on track based

on what the chief executives of the companies keep telling him.

Canada didn’t get any Pfizer doses last week after Pfizer announced a temporary reduction in deliveries so that it could upscale its Puurs, Belgium, plant to handle more production. That plant supplies all Pfizer shots delivered outside the U.S. Moderna has also had trouble scaling up production.

Trudeau reiterated that Canada has signed contracts with seven different vaccine makers and he expects Canada will get more doses per person than any other country in the world.

He reiterated that everyone who wants to be vaccinated will be by September. Officials say they have agreements to import 10 doses per Canadian. Canada has a population of 37 million. Canada does not have domestic vaccine production and the government made sure to arrange shipments from Europe instead of the U.S. because Europe was deemed



Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau holds a press conference to provide an update on the COVID-19 pandemic at Rideau Cottage in Ottawa, Ontario, on Friday, Jan. 29, 2021.

Associated Press

more reliable than the Trump administration.

The European Union has talked about a vaccine export ban, but Trudeau has said he’s been reassured by top EU officials that Canada will still its doses.

Trudeau also defended Canada’s arrangement for getting doses from the COVAX program coordinated by the World Health Organization, which seeks to ensure that low- and mid-

dle-income countries have enough vaccines at a time when wealthy nations have snapped up a large part of the billions of upcoming doses from mostly Western vaccine makers.

“When wealthier countries invest in COVAX, half of that funding is to get doses at home, and the other half is to buy doses for low- and middle-income countries,” Trudeau said.

“Our contribution was al-

ways intended to access vaccine doses for Canadians as well as to support lower income countries.”

Trudeau said through COVAX, and pending Health Canada approval, Canada will receive at least 1.9 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine before the end of June.

He said that’s addition to the 20 million doses Canada has already secured itself from AstraZeneca. □

Turkey’s Erdogan vows ‘no mercy’ to violent protesters

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Turkey’s president on Friday rebuffed U.S. and European criticism of his government’s handling of weeks-long demonstrations at a top Istanbul university, saying they should focus on violent protests in their own countries instead. Recep Tayyip Erdogan also vowed to show “no mercy” to protesters who use violence, and reiterated his determination not to allow the demonstrations spiral into mass anti-government protests like those that rocked the country in 2013. Students and faculty members at Bogazici University have been demonstrating in protest of Erdogan’s Jan. 1 appointment as rector of an academic with links to his ruling party. They have been calling on rector Melih Bulu to step down and for the university to be allowed to select its own president.

Some of the protests have led to clashes with police, resulting in hundreds of arrests — although most of the detainees were later released. Protests have been staged in the capital, Ankara, as well as Izmir and other cities in support of the Bogazici students.

Erdogan and other government officials drew condemnation over the security forces’ often heavy-handed handling of the demonstrations and using anti-LGBT rhetoric to decry the protests, after an artwork depicting Islam’s most holiest site with LGBT flags was displayed at the university. □



Paradise Beach Villas (Bougainville Development N.V.)

is seeking to outsource its Tiki Bar and Restaurant facility to a competent third party concessionaire.

Interested candidates are requested to respond by February 26th, 2021 in writing to: Managing Directors, Paradise Beach Villas, J.E. Irausquin Boulevard #64, Oranjestad or by e-mail andy@paradisebeach.aw, freddy@paradisebeach.aw and you will receive an RFP with further details.

ICC clears way for war crimes probe of Israeli actions

JERUSALEM (AP) — The International Criminal Court said Friday that its jurisdiction extends to territories occupied by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war, clearing the way for its chief prosecutor to open a war crimes probe into Israeli military actions.

The decision was welcomed by the Palestinians and decried by Israel's prime minister, who accused the court of "legal persecution."

The ICC's chief prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, said in 2019 that there was a "reasonable basis" to open a war crimes probe into Israeli military actions in the Gaza Strip as well as Israeli settlement activity in the occupied West Bank. But she asked the court to determine whether she has territorial jurisdiction before proceeding.

The Palestinians, who joined the court in 2015, have pushed for an investigation. Israel, which is not a member of the ICC, has said the court has no jurisdiction because the Palestinians do not have statehood and because the borders of any future state are to be decided in peace talks.

The Palestinians have asked the court to look into Israeli actions during its 2014 war



In this Tuesday Aug. 28, 2018 file photo, Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda at the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague, Netherlands.

against Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip, as well as Israel's construction of settlements in the occupied West Bank and annexed east Jerusalem.

The international community widely considers the settlements to be illegal under international law but has done little to pressure Israel to freeze or reverse their growth.

The international tribunal is

meant to serve as a court of last resort when countries' own judicial systems are unable or unwilling to investigate and prosecute war crimes.

Israel's military has mechanisms to investigate alleged wrongdoing by its troops, and despite criticism that the system is insufficient, experts say it has a good chance of fending off ICC investigation into its war-

time practices.

When it comes to settlements, however, experts say Israel could have a difficult time defending its actions. International law forbids the transfer of a civilian population into occupied territory.

Israel captured the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem in the 1967 war, territories the Palestinians want for their future state. Some

700,000 Israelis live in settlements in the West Bank and east Jerusalem. The Palestinians and much of the international community view the settlements as illegal and an obstacle to peace.

While the court would have a hard time prosecuting Israelis, it could issue arrest warrants that would make it difficult for Israeli officials to travel abroad. A case in the ICC would also be deeply embarrassing to the government.

The ICC could also potentially investigate crimes committed by Palestinians militants. Bensouda has said her probe would look into the actions of Hamas, which fired rockets indiscriminately into Israel during the 2014 war.

Nabil Shaath, a senior aide to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, welcomed the decision and said it proved the Palestinians were right to go to the ICC. "This is good news, and the next step is to launch an official investigation into Israel's crimes against our people," he said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the decision "proves once again the court is a political body and not a legal institution." □

Associated Press

UAE drastically cut funding for Palestinian refugees in 2020

JERUSALEM (AP) — The United Arab Emirates drastically reduced its funding

to the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees in 2020, the year it signed a U.S.-

brokered normalization accord with Israel that was heavily criticized by the Palestinian Authority.

The agency known as UNRWA provides education, health care and other vital services to some 5.7 million registered Palestinian refugees across the Middle East, mainly descendants of the 700,000 Palestinians who fled or were driven out of Israel during the 1948 war surrounding its creation.

The UAE donated \$51.8 million to UNRWA in 2018 and again in 2019, but in 2020 it gave the agency just \$1 million, agency spokesman Sami Mshasha said Friday, after it was first reported by Israeli media.

"We really are hoping that in 2021 they will go back to the levels of the previous years," he said.

Last year the UAE normalized relations with Israel, breaking with a longstanding Arab consensus that recognition should only come in exchange for concessions in the peace process with the Palestinians, which has been moribund for more than a decade.

Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco struck similar agreements shortly thereafter, in what the Trump administration touted as a historic diplomatic achievement. President Joe Biden welcomed the accords and has said he will encourage

the resumption of direct peace talks.

The Palestinian Authority, however, viewed the agreements as a betrayal and harshly criticized the UAE. That may have prompted the federation of oil-rich sheikhdoms, which includes Dubai and Abu Dhabi, to slash aid.

Critics of UNRWA say it perpetuates the refugee problem created by the 1948 Arab-Israeli war and the Palestinians' demand of a "right of return" for the refugees and their descendants. Israel adamantly rejects the idea of a right of return, which if fully implemented would leave the country with a Palestinian majority. □



In this March 31, 2020 file photo, Palestinian workers load food supplies distributed by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) at the Sheikh Redwan neighborhood of Gaza City.

Associated Press

Jamaica faces marijuana shortage as farmers struggle

By **SHARLENE HENDRICKS**
and **DÁNICA COTO**
KINGSTON, Jamaica (AP)

— Jamaica is running low on ganja.

Heavy rains followed by an extended drought, an increase in local consumption and a drop in the number of marijuana farmers have caused a shortage in the island's famed but largely illegal market that experts say is the worst they've seen.

"It's a cultural embarrassment," said Triston Thompson, chief opportunity explorer for Tacaya, a consulting and brokerage firm for the country's nascent legal cannabis industry.

Jamaica, which foreigners have long associated with pot, reggae and Rastafarians, authorized a regulated medical marijuana industry and decriminalized small amounts of weed in 2015. People caught with 2 ounces (56 grams) or less of cannabis are supposed to pay a small fine and face no arrest or criminal record. The island also allows individuals to cultivate up to five plants, and Rastafarians are legally allowed to smoke ganja for sacramental purposes.

But enforcement is spotty as many tourists and locals continue to buy marijuana



In this Aug. 29, 2013 file photo, farmer Breezy shows off the distinctive leaves of a marijuana plant during a tour of his plantation in Jamaica's central mountain town of Nine Mile.

Associated Press

on the street, where it has grown more scarce — and more expensive.

Heavy rains during last year's hurricane season pummeled marijuana fields that were later scorched in the drought that followed, causing tens of thousands of dollars in losses, according to farmers who cultivate pot outside the legal system. "It destroyed everything," said Daneyel Bozra, who grows marijuana in the southwest part of Jamaica,

in a historical village called Accompong founded by escaped 18th-century slaves known as Maroons. Worsening the problem were strict COVID-19 measures, including a 6 p.m. curfew that meant farmers couldn't tend to their fields at night as is routine, said Kenrick Wallace, 29, who cultivates 2 acres (nearly a hectare) in Accompong with the help of 20 other farmers.

He noted that a lack of

roads forces many farmers to walk to reach their fields and then to get water from wells and springs. Many were unable to do those chores at night due to the curfew.

Wallace estimated he lost more than \$18,000 in recent months and cultivated only 300 pounds, compared with an average of 700 to 800 pounds the group normally produces.

Activists say they believe the pandemic and a loos-

ening of Jamaica's marijuana laws has led to an increase in local consumption that has contributed to the scarcity, even if the pandemic has put a dent in the arrival of ganja-seeking tourists.

"Last year was the worst year. ... We've never had this amount of loss," Thompson said. "It's something so laughable that cannabis is short in Jamaica."

Tourists, too, have taken note, placing posts on travel websites about difficulties finding the drug.

Paul Burke, CEO of Jamaica's Ganja Growers and Producers Association, said in a phone interview that people are no longer afraid of being locked up now that the government allows possession of small amounts. He said the stigmatization against ganja has diminished and more people are appreciating its claimed therapeutic and medicinal value during the pandemic.

Burke also said that some traditional small farmers have stopped growing in frustration because they can't afford to meet requirements for the legal market while police continue to destroy what he described as "good ganja fields." □

Pushed by China, Guyana cancels Taiwanese investment office

By **BERT WILKINSON**
GEORGETOWN, Guyana (AP)

— Under pressure from mainland China, Guyana's government has cancelled permission for Taiwan to open a trade and investment office in the South American country.

The cancellation came Thursday after Foreign Minister Hugh Todd met with the ambassador of China, which insists that Taiwan is legally a part of its territory and not an independent nation.

The government issued a statement clarifying "that it continues to adhere to the One China policy and its diplomatic relations remain intact with the People's Republic of China.

The government has not established any diplomatic ties or relations with Taiwan and as a result of the miscommunication of the agreement signed, this agreement has since been terminated."

Todd told The Associated Press on Friday that government had initially not seen anything wrong in allowing the Taiwanese to set up an office to push trade and investment in Guyana, which has in the past 14 months become one of the world's newest oil exporting nations.

"The idea was to allow them to establish an office to facilitate trade and investment only — and I say only — for trade. For us this was just a market oppor-

tunity for the two private sectors to conduct business but there are some geopolitics involved here," Todd said.

The agreement to establish the office was signed on Jan. 11 without any official announcement and the office became active on Jan. 15. Few took note until the U.S. Embassy in Guyana congratulated both sides for the achievement. Todd said he met a Chinese delegation led by acting Ambassador Chen Xilai on Thursday. He did not divulge any details, but the cancellation followed immediately after.

Guyana is the headquarters of the 15-member Caribbean Community. Back in 1972, it had

encouraged neighbors Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados and Jamaica to end China's isolation in the region by establish-

ing diplomatic relations as a group, with most of the bloc following after. The group largely maintains a One China policy. □



In this image made from video, Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Joanne Ou points at a map of Guyana at a weekly press conference, Thursday, Feb. 4, 2021, in Taipei, Taiwan.

Associated Press

LOCAL



EAGLE BEACH — Aruba Today had an interesting talk with General Manager Alex Nieuwmeyer, you can call him 'The Divi man'. Dutch-born Nieuwmeyer has earned his spurs in the hospitality world with years of experience running hotels in New York, Boston and Las Vegas in the U.S. 26 years ago he came to Aruba to lift Divi Resorts Aruba and promised himself before he arrived, he would not stay on this tiny island coming from big city life with a career running. "But I never left, I love Aruba and the independency to do it all here."

Nieuwmeyer's career

"I have been with the brand 26 years now. I am Dutch and in 1975 I moved to the US working in New York as a GM for two hotels at Park Avenue. I also worked for the Sheraton cooperation long time in Boston, followed by Bally's in Las Vegas, after that went back to Sheraton in Montreal and functioned as well as a corporate food and beverage director for the west coast of the U.S., I was based in L.A. at that time. Sheraton was sold to Starwood at some point and they closed all the regional offices. A friend of mine offered me a job in New York as GM for Doral Hotels, who had a management contract with Divi Aruba. Later Doral fell a part due to bad management of the original owner's son and later grandson. They needed someone to go down there and I was the

only one speaking Dutch_ so an obvious choice. I told myself: I will only go for one year, I am not going to stay on an island while making career in New York. That was 26 years ago from now....."

He stayed because of the opportunity to be independent, to run a property with your own creativity and space. "We do so much ourselves here and I love that. For example at Divi Tamarijn we did the new room and restaurant designs up to the purchase of the furniture." Nieuwmeyer proves to be a man with a hands-on mentality.

How did you experience the crisis?

"In February we heard about the Covid-19 situation in Bergamo, Italy and we were thinking: Oh my, we have 1.2 million on the books for honeymooners in July and August. Beginning of March we were discussing how to compensate this, and March 15th, 2020 Aruba went into a lockdown. We were caught completely off guard by the fast course of events. And still we thought that it would be over in September/October that year. We were very optimistic." In the meantime, Nieuwmeyer and his team took the opportunity to renovate the Divi Tamarijn rooms, turning them into more spacious ones and with a fresh, refurbished look. "We did not lay anybody off, but we do apply salary subsidy. The occupancy is still not good and with the new testing requirement of the

Alex Nieuwmeyer, General Manager at Divi Resorts Aruba:

"1200 employees, 33 cultures, we are the Divi family"

U.S. we were hit hard again."

All of the four Divi properties have in-house testing center and they take bookings in advance. You will be able to either book your appointment from home before departure or upon arrival at check in. "We will never be sold out. All information is to be found through the website www.diviaruba.com."

Community commitment, what is it to Divi?

"Throughout the years we have always worked with the community, supporting local charity events and also our local artists. You can find art objects in all our properties. We then got involved with Divi Impact, a concept where partly the Divi employees contribute and we suggest a \$1 per night contribution from our guests but totally voluntarily. The YMCA Oranjestad was kind of built by Divi and after that we supported the Kids Council, an initiative by Princess Laurentien from the Dutch royal family which led us to an elementary school, Pius X-college, where we noticed the poor financial state of our education. Divi undertook action and realized the school's full air-conditioning, a complete painting and we provided all children with iPads to execute their educational program. We will follow up with new TVs soon."

The Kids Council, where children structurally help institutions and organizations think about strategic and social issues, dived into a Divi dilemma: internal discrimination between employees. "It was pretty hefty. The children did very well, they interviewed the employees and with their project they had to go to the Netherlands to compete with the other parts of the Dutch Kingdom. Divi actually implemented the student's ideas like for example the cultural fair. As a result you see an increased team spirit."

We are the Divi family, what does it mean?

"With 1200 employees and 33 cultures within the Divi we have quite an operation running. With

the earlier mentioned cultural fair, we asked our employees to bring the typical food of their country to share. It was fantastic with employees dancing and eating together. We are Divi, team spirit is one of our successes. Yes, we work well with our employees and the union."

Will Aruba's tourism recover soon?

"Tourism is very resilient, when I heard about New York on September 11th, 2001, I thought: This is it, it is over, and we are done with Aruba's tourism. But we were empty for a week and a week after the air traffic came to rescue the people that could not return earlier. The week after that, we were back to 90 % occupancy again. Of course we dropped a bit in numbers in January, February, March because September is the booking period for those months, but recovery went fast.

Right now we are very down but what we see in March and April are bookings even with the new CDC measure. We have 50 % occupancy in the books for March and April which is promising. Depending on the vaccinations, how fast they can act, and the ever-changing mutations, we are hopeful to return to 60/70 % occupancy in summer and by fall almost return to normal strength. Aruba is popular, it is safe and it has its protocols in place. Airlifts come with demand, I do not worry that much. However, for Aruba it is very important to carry out the message that it is easy to come here and that we take care of the testing."

Aruba, what comes to your mind?

"A safe and friendly paradise, offering a high-quality vacation product with constant great weather." □



MONDAY MADNESS AND BINGO ARE TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED

Free Shirt Sunday!

Get a **FREE** Alhambra T-Shirt when you earn **250 Slot Points** on Sunday with your **Players' Club card!**

THE SHOPS AT ALHAMBRA CASINO

Offering a wide variety of Retail & Dining Outlets, Salon & Spa Services, Souvenirs and more.

Dunkin Donuts | Baskin Robbins
Hungry Piranha | Aruba Aloe
Shalom Body & Soul Spa

Coming Soon: The Brownstone Ribs & Seafood

Alhambra
CASINO AND SHOPS

Open daily 9am to 10pm | J.E. Irawsqin Blvd #47 | 583.5000 | casinoalhambra.com

Play Responsibly. Visit www.gamblersanonymous.org if you or someone you know has a gambling problem.



Emerald Ambassadors honored

NOORD — Recently, Kimberley Richardson of the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure to honor Aruba's loyal and friendly visitors as Emerald Ambassadors of Aruba. The symbolic Emerald Ambassador certificate is presented on behalf of the minister of tourism, as a token of appreciation to guests who visit Aruba 35 years and more consecutively.

The honorees were couple **Don & Bobbi Lapinson** from Boynton Beach, Florida.

The Emerald Ambassador is the highest certificate that we present, and is given to visitors who have been visiting Aruba 35 years or more consecutively. Mr. & Mrs. Lapinson have been visiting Aruba for 39 years consecutively! The ceremony was one of importance because honoring visitors who have been coming to Aruba for over 35

years is incredibly rare and it was a very memorable moment for all of us.

This lovely couple stated that they love the island very much, especially for its year-round sunny weather, nice sandy beaches and picturesque sunsets, its cleanliness and safety, and Aruba's warm and friendly people who became like family to them. This couple not only fell in-love with the island, but also brought family and friends to Aruba.

Richardson together with the representatives of the Caribbean Palm Village Resort presented the certificate to the honorees, handed over some presents and also thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination and as their home-away-from-home. □



ORANJESTAD — You are back and we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.

Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: news@arubatoday.com and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep

Aruba to me

your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of its affiliated companies to use said materials, as well as names, likeness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation.

Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again.

For today we received some amazing pictures from Rosalyn Bernstein Charnes. She says:

"Aruba to me is Heaven on Earth. I just turned 90 years old on December 27. I have been coming to Aruba since 1995, twenty-six years at my home

away from home. I live in Union, New Jersey. I got married for the second time in 1994 and I went to Hawaii on my honeymoon. The following year my husband and I traveled to Aruba and stayed at the old Hilton near the two closed towers. We went to a timeshare meeting at the yet to be built Phoenix Resort. I said to my husband, "Aruba is just like Maui except here there are casinos." We bought one week and then my husband said: "In 40 years I will be 105 years old, I won't know if I'm in Aruba or New Jersey." Unfortunately, he died two years later. I became a standup comedian about six years ago and I am known as Roxie La Rouche at the Phoenix. I did my comedy routine at the Karaoke night every week for the past six years. Since Roxy cannot perform at the Phoenix

stage to do her comedy routine due to the COVID-19, I do my comedy routine every Sunday at 5:30pm on Facebook. I miss the laughter of a live audience but my daughter, who is also my producer, provides canned laughter, although it is not the same. Now I have increased my weeks in Aruba from one week to six weeks. My daughter rescued me from my prison home, and I was pardoned not by Donald Trump but by my cherished trip to Aruba. The fresh air, the Divi staff, and my friends have kept me healthy and happy, when I see the weather reports from home I am so blessed to be on this wonderful island. I hope that I will return to my second home for many more years to come. I have become a young woman here and no one believes my age. I am now "Free at Last". □

International reserves remain adequate



ORANJESTAD — During its meeting of December 14, 2020 and after reviewing the most recent economic and monetary data, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Centrale Bank van Aruba (CBA) de-

cided to keep the reserve requirement at 7.0 percent. The reserve requirement refers to the minimum amount of reserves that commercial banks must hold at the CBA and is equal to 7.0 percent of their liabilities

with a maturity less than 2 years. The following information and analysis were considered in reaching this decision.

International reserves
International reserves (in-

cluding revaluation differences of gold and foreign exchange holdings), up to and including November 27, 2020, strengthened by Afl. 467.9 million compared to the end of December 2019. This ex-

pansion was the result of a sharp drop in imports due to reduced tourist and domestic demand, external financing received by the government, the foreign exchange measures taken by the CBA, and a revaluation of the gold holdings of the CBA following an increase in the market price of gold on the international market. Official reserves increased by Afl. 502.3 million.

Consequently, the official and international reserves grew to, respectively, Afl. 2,267.0 million and Afl. 2,367.4 million as of November 27, 2020. Accordingly, the level of reserves remained adequate when benchmarked against the current account import payments and the ARA metric by the IMF (Figure 1). At the end of November 2020, international reserves covered 10.0 months of current account payments, while official reserves equaled 106.6 percent of the ARA metric. □

Celebrate Love!

Valentine's Day is the celebration of love, beauty and romantic mood between couples and/or friends. It is a festive day where you would like to emphasize the importance of this special person in your life. You can do this in many ways, by sending cards, flowers, gifts, presents or arranging a wonderful day/night out.

While enjoying your stay in Aruba you can make this day extra spe-

cial by surprising your love with the help of Aruba Today. Despite the fact that we have wonderful dinner and gift options to choose from, advertised in our newspaper in the coming days up to February 14th, we can make this day even more special.

Surprise your loved one with a picture of her/him or both of you in Aruba Today, accompanied by your personal message. Imagine taking your vacation breakfast in



the morning while going through the newspaper and all of a sudden you see YOU. This will make her or his day for sure.

What Do You Do?

Send your selected picture (high resolution JPEG) with short personal Valentine message (maximum 40 words) to email: news@arubatoday.com by latest Friday February 12.

What Will We Do?

We will publish your picture and message in the local section of Aruba Today on Saturday February 13 in our printed newspaper and on our website and Facebook page.

Make her/him smile on this special day, do something different!

There is only one happiness in this life, to love and be loved. ... ~ George Sand



Super Bowl ads aim to comfort and connect

NEW YORK (AP) — Super Bowl ads each year offer a snapshot of the American psyche. And this year, it's a doozy.

After a year of pandemic fear and isolation, a tumultuous election capped by a riot at the Capitol, and periodic uncertainty as to whether there would even BE a Super Bowl, marketers have to tread carefully. The ideal: promote their brands to a weary audience looking for comfort and escapism without crossing any lines that might trigger viewers.

So Will Ferrell is teaming with GM — and Awkwafina and Kenan Thompson — on a madcap cross country dash to promote electric vehicles. Amazon toys with sexual innuendo when a woman is distracted by her new Alexa assistant that looks like the actor Michael B. Jordan. And Anheuser-Busch offers a hopeful look toward a time when we can say "let's get a beer" to friends and coworkers again.

"Comfort is key," said Villanova University marketing professor Charles Taylor. "Being edgy is going to get attention, but it risks getting out of the comfort zone at a time people have been cooped up in their homes and economic times are tough for many." The prize for those who get the bal-



This photo provided by Frito-Lay shows a scene from Frito-Lay 2021 Super Bowl NFL football spot. Associated Press

ance right? The chance to break into the psyche and (virtual) watercooler talk of an estimated 100 million viewers who will be watching the CBS broadcast of Super Bowl LV on Sunday.

NEW WORLD ORDER

With big names such as Coke, Hyundai and Kia sitting it out this year, newcomers are rushing in. This year's Super Bowl will showcase more than 20 first-time advertisers — more than double the 8 from last year if you exclude campaign ads, according to a tally by research firm iSpot. Many are flush with cash thanks to changing consumer habits

during the pandemic. It's a bellwether when a brand can afford the estimated \$5.5 million cost-of-entry for a 30-second spot during the Super Bowl. This year's class includes the companies that brought us our food, let us shop online and helped us work from home. Among them are delivery services DoorDash and Uber Eats, the job site Indeed, the car site Vroom, the recently headline-grabbing investing app Robinhood, and the computer accessories company Logitech. Most are taking tried-and-true ad approaches. Door-

Dash enlists Sesame Street characters for a dose of nostalgia. Logitech goes the celebrity route with an endorsement from hip hop artist Little Nas X intended to underscore that its products like keyboards and mice help artists and makers "defy logic." And in what is surely a first in Super Bowl history, an ad for Inspiration4, a SpaceX supported all-civilian space launch, touts a chance for viewers to join the mission. Courtesy of payment processor Shift4 Payments, whose CEO, Jared Isaacman, will command that mission.

PANDEMIC LIFE

Some marketers took aim at the changing habits and ways we live during the pandemic. Tide's ad depicts a boy not wanting to wash a clean-looking sweatshirt with the face of "Seinfeld" star Jason Alexander on it. But as the sweatshirt collects garbage and dog drool, Alexander's face starts scowling, and only perks up when Tide saves the day.

By suggesting that you may be wearing the same clothes more, and washing them less, the ad encourages more detergent use, said Kim Whitler, a marketing professor at the University of Virginia. "They wouldn't have run this ad if COVID hadn't happened," she said

Amazon, meanwhile, knows people stuck at home all year might be fantasizing about something new. So a woman's new Amazon Alexa takes on the voice and body of actor Michael B. Johnson, to the consternation of her hapless husband.

Meanwhile, a Cheetos ad shows real life married couple Mila Kunis and Ashton Kutcher wrangling over a bag of Cheetos Crunch Pop Mix — to the tune of Shaggy's "It Wasn't Me," evincing the frayed nerves of a couple who have been stuck inside too long. □

U.S. trade deficit rises to 12-year high \$679 billion

By **PAUL WISEMAN**
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. trade deficit rose 17.7% last year to \$679 billion, highest since 2008, as the coronavirus disrupted global commerce and confounded then-President Donald Trump's attempts to rebalance America's trade with the rest of the world.

The gap between the value of the goods and services the United States sells abroad and what it buys climbed from \$577 billion in 2019, the Commerce Department said Friday. Ex-

ports skidded 15.7% to \$2.1 trillion, and imports fell 9.5% to \$2.8 trillion.

As president, Trump sought to narrow the gap by imposing taxes on imported goods on a scale unseen since the trade wars of the 1930s. The deficit narrowed slightly in 2019 but then ballooned last year as coronavirus restrictions hammered U.S. exports of services such as tourism and education. Services exports dropped 20.4% last year.

Still, the U.S. ran a \$237 billion surplus last year in services. But that was over-

whelmed by a \$916 billion deficit in trade in goods such as aircraft and auto parts.

The politically sensitive deficit with China in the sale of goods fell 10% last year to \$311 billion; Trump had imposed tariffs on \$360 billion worth of Chinese imports to protest Beijing's sharp-elbowed efforts to supplant Western dominance in technology, an effort that U.S. alleged included cybertheft.

In the December, the trade deficit dropped to \$66.6 billion, down 3.5% from November. Exports

rose 3.4%, and imports increased 1.5%. □



In this Nov. 4, 2019, file photo, cargo cranes are used to take containers off of a Yang Ming Marine Transport Corporation boat at the Port of Tacoma in Tacoma, Wash.

Associated Press

Under the sea, humans have changed ocean sounds

By CHRISTINA LARSON

WASHINGTON (AP) — Not only are humans changing the surface and temperature of the planet, but also its sounds — and those shifts are detectable even in the open ocean, according to research published Thursday.

Changes in the ocean soundscape affect wide swaths of marine life, from tiny snapping shrimp to huge right whales, the researchers found.

"Sounds travel very far underwater. For fish, sound is probably a better way to sense their environment than light," said Francis Juanes, an ecologist at the University of Victoria in Canada and a co-author of the paper in the journal Science.

While light tends to scatter in water, he said, sounds travel much faster through water than through air.

Many fish and marine animals use sound to communicate with each other, to locate promising locations to breed or feed, and possibly to detect predators. For example, snapping shrimp make a sound resembling popping corn that stuns their prey. Humpback whale songs can resemble a violinist's melodies.

But increased noise from shipping traffic, motorized



In this Sunday, June 28, 2015 file photo, sergeant major fish, a type of damselfish, swim near the surface of the Red Sea in the resort town of Sharm el-Sheikh, south Sinai, Egypt.

Associated Press

fishing vessels, underwater oil and gas exploration, offshore construction and other human activity is making it harder for fish to hear each other.

The researchers sifted through thousands of data sets and research articles documenting changes in noise volume and frequency to assemble a comprehensive picture of how the ocean soundscape is changing — and how marine life is impacted.

Using underwater microphones, scientists can record fish sounds — which tend to hover around the same low frequencies as shipping traffic noise.

"For many marine species, their attempts to communicate are being masked by sounds that humans have introduced," said Carlos Duarte, a marine ecologist at the Red Sea Research Center in Saudi Arabia and co-author of the paper.

The Red Sea is one of the

world's key shipping corridors, full of large vessels traveling to Asia, Europe and Africa. Some fish and invertebrates now avoid the noisiest areas, as the sound effectively fragments their Red Sea habitat, he said.

Meanwhile the overall number of marine animals has declined by about half since 1970. In some parts of the ocean, scientists now record "fewer animals singing and calling than in

the past — those voices are gone," said Duarte.

Climate change also influences physical processes that shape ocean sounds, such as winds, waves and melting ice, the researchers found.

"Imagine having to raise your kids in a place that's noisy all the time. It's no wonder many marine animals are showing elevated and detectable levels of stress due to noise," said Joe Roman, a University of Vermont marine ecologist, who was not involved in the paper.

"When people think of threats facing the ocean, we often think of climate change, plastics and overfishing. But noise pollution is another essential thing we need to be monitoring," said Neil Hammerschlag, a University of Miami marine ecologist, who was not involved with the paper.

"If you make something for the ocean, think about how to make it quieter," he said.

Sound pollution may be simpler to address than other ocean threats, said the University of Victoria's Juanes. "In theory, you can reduce or turn off sound immediately — it's not like plastics or climate change, which are much harder to undo." □

Tiny chameleon a contender for title of smallest reptile

BERLIN (AP) — It fits on a human fingertip, but this chameleon could make a big splash. Scientists from Madagascar and Germany say a



Picture taken in 2012 in Munich, Germany shows a newly discovered species of chameleon which is a contender for the title of world's smallest reptile.

Associated Press

newly discovered species of chameleon is a contender for the title of world's smallest reptile.

Frank Glaw, who was part of the international team of researchers that classified the new species and named it *Brookesia nana* said the body of the male specimen appeared to be just 13.5-millimeters-long (a little more than a 1/2-inch.) That's at least 1.5 millimeters smaller than the previous record holder, another member of the *Brookesia* family.

Glaw, a reptile expert at the Bavarian State Collection of Zoology in Munich, said the tiny male and a slightly larger female were

spotted on a mountainside by a local guide during a 2012 expedition.

"You really have to get down on your knees to find them," Glaw told The Associated Press in a telephone interview Friday. "They are obviously camouflaged and they move very slowly."

Glaw and his colleagues performed a CT scan of the female and discovered that it harbored two eggs, confirming that it was an adult. For the male, the researchers took a close look at its "well-developed" genitals, which in chameleons come in pairs known as hemipenes. They found that the geni-

tals of the *Brookesia nana* specimen were almost one-fifth of its body size, possibly to allow it to mate with the larger female.

"I have few doubts it's an adult male," Glaw said. "If we had a pair mating it would obviously be better proof."

Confirming *Brookesia nana* as the smallest reptile species will require finding more of them, which might take several years, he said. The team's research was recently published in the journal *Scientific Reports*. Chameleons are threatened by deforestation on Madagascar, which is home to numerous species. □

VP's historic election celebrated in cracked glass portrait

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE
WASHINGTON (AP) — Two weeks after Kamala Harris was sworn in as the first woman to be vice president, her barrier-breaking career has been memorialized in a portrait that depicts her face emerging from the cracks in a massive sheet of glass. The 6-by-6 foot (1.8 meter), 350-pound (159 kilogram) portrait, meant to symbolize Harris breaking through a glass ceiling, was unveiled Thursday at the Lincoln Memorial by groups excited by Harris' historic election as the first woman and person of color to the nation's second-highest office.

"This will just be a wonderful visual emblem of this moment in time and hopefully people will reflect a little bit on all the barriers that have been broken by her election," said Holly Hotchner, president and CEO of the National Women's History Museum, a co-sponsor of the project.

Harris has notched a series of firsts during a legal and political career that has taken her from California to the office of vice president in Washington.

The 56-year-old daughter of Indian and Jamaican immigrants was the first woman and person of color to serve as San Francisco's district attorney, the first woman and first Black person to become California's attorney general, the first Black person to represent California in the U.S. Senate and the first woman, Black person and Asian American to be elected vice president.

She is also the first vice president with a historically Black college, Howard University, for an alma mater. "I think what makes it so moving to me is to see the tiny cracks, to see those fissures and everything they represent," said Lindsay Kaplan, a co-founder of Chief, a networking organization for female executives and portrait co-sponsor. The idea to commission a portrait to commemorate Harris' election originated at



The installation "Vice President Kamala Harris Glass Ceiling Breaker" is seen at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, Wednesday, Feb. 4, 2021.

Associated Press

the creative agency BBH New York. □

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

	9						7	
1								3
		8	6		5	4		
		4		7		5		
			4	6	2			
		9		8		6		
		7	8		1	3		
5								1
	4						6	

Difficulty Level ★★★★★

2/06

©2021 Conceptis Puzzles, Dist. by King Features Syndicate, Inc.

ROCOCO PLAZA
FLEAMARKET #ONE
SUNDAY FEBRUARY 7
Antiqueshop 9 -1 pm
LOTS OF DISCOUNTS
Open Mon-Sat 9.30- 1
FERIA Garage/Charity Every
Saturday 9 -1.30
Vegetables Fruits Fish
Plants etc..INFO 741-5640

Casa del Mar 2BR/2B

Week 2/1113 (16k);
Week 5/1315 (18k);
Week 5&6/1521 (20k/Wk.);
Week 7&8/1408 (18k/Wk.);
Week 8/1113; 8/1409 (17k/Wk.);
Week 9/1218 (15k);
Week 10/1207 (15k);
Week 11/1419 (13k); and,
Weeks 13-15 also available!
CDMOwner@gmail.com
U.S. (860)992-3890

213823



HEALTH

DOCTOR ON DUTY

Oranjestad

Hospital 7:00 pm / 10:00pm
Tel. 527 4000

San Nicolas

Imsan 24 hours
Tel.524 8833

PHARMACY ON DUTY

Oranjestad:

Eagle (Maria) Tel. 585 8145

San Nicolas:

Centro Medico Tel. 584 5794

OTHER

Dental Clinic 587 9850

Blood Bank Aruba 587 0002

Urgent Care 586 0448

Walk-In Doctor's Clinic

+297 588 0539

EMERGENCY

Police	100
Oranjestad	527 3140
Noord	527 3200
Sta. Cruz	527 2900
San Nicolas	584 5000
Police Tipline	11141
Ambulancia	911
Fire Dept.	115
Red Cross	582 2219

TAXI SERVICES

Taxi Tas	587 5900
Prof. Taxi	588 0035
Taxi D.T.S.	587 2300
Taxi Serv. Aruba	583 3232
A1 Taxi Serv.	280 2828

TRAVEL INFO

Aruba Airport	524 2424
American Airlines	582 2700
Avianca	588 0059
Jet Blue	588 2244
Surinam	582 7896

AID FOUNDATIONS

FAVI- Visually Impaired
Tel. 582 5051

Alcoholics Anonymous
Tel. 736 2952

Narcotics Anonymous
Tel. 583 8989

Fundacion Contra Violencia
Relacional Tel. 583 5400

Centre for Diabetes
Tel. 524 8888

Child Abuse Prevention
Tel. 582 4433

Quota Club Tel. 525 2672

General Info

Phone Directory Tel. 118



facebook.com/arubatoday/

ARUBA TODAY

Editor
Caribbean Speed Printers N.V.
Aruba Bank N.V. Acc. #332668
Caribbean Mercantile Bank N.V.
Acc. #23951903
RBC Royal Bank Acc. #1330772

Assistant Director
Xiomara Arends

Editor in Chief
Linda Reijnders
(linda.reijnders@cspnv.com)
Liza Koolman (Management assistant)

Editors
Richard Brooks

Sales
Linda Reijnders
(linda.reijnders@cspnv.com)
Sulaika Croes

Classifieds
classified@cspnv.com

Distribution and Collection
accounting@bondia.com

Social / Website
Juan Luis Pinto
Pilar Flores

Columnists
Anthony Croes
Joris Zantvoort
Thais Franken

Weststraat 22
T: 582-7800
E: news@arubatoday.com
W: www.arubatoday.com
@arubatoday

'CODA' has loud message even when there's silence

GARY GERARD HAMILTON

New York (AP) — The breakout hit of this year's Sundance Film Festival is set to expand the conversation about diversity in Hollywood.

"CODA," which stands for "Child of Deaf Adults," invites viewers into a world many have never seen, with a silence they've never experienced. It depicts the life of a mostly deaf family whose love, friction, drama and laughter is the same as any other family, but communicated through sign language.

The movie, a remake of the award-winning 2014 French film "La Famille Bélier," won the festival's top audience and grand jury awards and set a Sundance record by selling to Apple for \$25 million.

Written and directed by Sian Heder, it was shot in Gloucester, Massachusetts, during the summer of 2019.

The movie follows Ruby, the only hearing person in her New England family, as she contemplates leaving their struggling fishing business — and her role as their interpreter — to pursue her own dreams at the Berklee College of Music. The family is forced to figure out how they'll survive without her.

Deaf actors Troy Kotsur, Daniel Durant and Marlee Matlin — the only deaf actor to win an Oscar — play Ruby's family. Emilia Jones stars as Ruby.

Jones wasn't an obvious choice to play the role of Ruby, which demanded singing and knowledge of American Sign Language. The 18-year-old British actor had no formal training in either.

"I remember thinking whoever is lucky enough to be able to play Ruby is a very, very, very lucky girl because it's not very often



This image released by the Sundance Institute shows Emilia Jones in a scene from "CODA," an official selection of the U.S. Dramatic Competition at the 2021 Sundance Film Festival.

Associated Press

that you have so many skills that you can learn for a film. I had to learn sign language. I've never had a singing lesson before we started," she said. "But I love, I love, I love a challenge and I love a film that will educate me and make me grow as a person."

The film highlights the humanity of those with disabilities while dispelling myths, showing in one instance how deaf people experience music. Ruby and her brother tease and sign profane insults at each other, while their parents' extremely active sex life plays out in awkward, hysterical situations.

"The first thing that came to mind is my daughter, who is a real-life CODA. And when I read it over, that gave me some flashbacks based on my experience in this world," said Kotsur, recalling first reading the script. "It's a good experience for

the audience to come into deaf culture and get an inside view of what it looks like."

During filming, two ASL experts reviewed the script, helped Heder interpret the scenes and relay messages to the cast. They also made adjustments if scenes were not true to deaf culture. Subtitles are used when family members are communicating with each other, but only Ruby's translations are heard when they speak with hearing people. Matlin, who won the best actress Academy Award in 1987 for "Children of a Lesser God," says "CODA" is "the full package" in portraying the deaf community on screen.

"No offense to the other projects that I've been involved in where there were deaf characters in them, (but) I found that since 'Children of a Lesser God,' there wasn't really a pro-

found exploration of characters being deaf, whether they were authentically deaf or the story was about being deaf or love in the deaf and hearing communities," she said.

"For people who have never seen deaf people or have never even seen sign language and they think that the we're all the same, that we live the same way, that we come from the same mind-set, we are not," said Matlin. "We are as varied as people who can hear, and this is one facet of the deaf community."

Heder and the actors say they hope "CODA" challenges Hollywood. Although diversity has been a hot topic in recent years, discussions are generally centered only around race and gender. Heder, who began learning ASL a year before filming, says the industry should shift from its tendency to cast non-disabled actors as characters with disabilities.

"When we started casting ... I think everyone needed to be educated. I remember people saying, 'Well, are there deaf actors out there?' And there are a world of deaf actors out there," she said. "Troy is in-

credibly talented and he won this part, but there were other amazing actors that came in and auditioned for that role. And I would say that about every role across the board."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1 in 4 U.S. adults — approximately 61 million people — has a disability that impacts major life activities. A 2017 study from the University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism found that just 2.7% of characters in the 100 highest-earning movies in 2016 were disabled, revealing the huge chasm between the population and what's on screens.

There have been advances in recent years. Zack Gottsagen, an actor with Down syndrome, won acclaim starring in 2019's "The Peanut Butter Falcon" alongside Shia LaBeouf. Deaf actor Lauren Ridloff will portray Marvel's first deaf superhero in Chloe Zhao's "The Eternals," set for release in November. Last week, NBCUniversal announced that it will commit to auditioning actors with disabilities for each new studio production in hopes to increase disability representation on screen.

Heder hopes the entertainment industry expands its thinking when it comes to casting.

"(Filmmakers) have a role in their script that says 'open ethnicity,' but they don't think to add that this could be open to someone with a disability or you could cast a deaf person in that role," she said. "The more awareness people have, in writers' rooms, directors, creators (will) start to open up their minds and understand that inclusion really means other things." □



LIKE US ON
facebook
[Facebook.com/arubatoday/](https://www.facebook.com/arubatoday/)

4	9	5	3	1	8	2	7	6
1	2	6	7	9	4	8	5	3
3	7	8	6	2	5	4	1	9
6	8	4	1	7	9	5	3	2
7	5	3	4	6	2	1	9	8
2	1	9	5	8	3	6	4	7
9	6	7	8	5	1	3	2	4
5	3	2	9	4	6	7	8	1
8	4	1	2	3	7	9	6	5

As Serena, Nadal eye records at Australian Open, COVID looms

By **HOWARD FENDRICH**
AP Tennis Writer

Easy as it is to assemble a list of significant Australian Open story lines — from Rafael Nadal's bid for a men's-record 21st Grand Slam singles trophy to Serena Williams' try for her 24th, from Novak Djokovic's attempt to win a third consecutive title at Melbourne Park to Sofia Kenin's defense of her first major championship, and so on — nothing hangs over the upcoming two weeks quite like questions involving the coronavirus. There is, after all, still a pandemic in progress.

"During the tough months of quarantine in Spain," said Nadal, who equaled Roger Federer at 20 majors, three ahead of Djokovic, by winning the French Open in October, "(there) have been too many problems to think about tennis, no?"

And no matter how much better Australia has contained its COVID-19 outbreak than countries such as the United States, a reminder of the precarious nature of a large, international sports event came just a handful of days before the scheduled beginning of the year's first Grand Slam tennis tournament on Monday (Sunday EST): A full day of competition at the half-dozen tuneups in Melbourne was postponed because of a positive test for a worker at a hotel that housed 160 players in January.

The draw for the Australian Open was pushed back a



United States' Serena Williams serves to Australia's Daria Gavrilova during a tuneup tournament ahead of the Australian Open tennis championships in Melbourne, Australia, Monday, Feb. 1, 2021.

Associated Press

day, too.

Before the 24-hour break was announced, Australian player Nick Kyrgios captured a common sentiment, tweeting: "Am I playing tomorrow?"

"It was a bit of uncertainty," he said later. "I had no idea what was going on."

Those sorts of doubt could linger at a major tournament that already was pushed back three weeks from its original start date to allow for all of the entrants and their entourages to quarantine upon arrival on the continent.

"From a tennis point of view, you cannot prepare 100%," 2019 U.S. Open runner-up Daniil Medvedev said. "You

try to do what you can."

Williams, a seven-time champion in Melbourne, said that the Achilles tendon issue that hampered her last year in a loss at the U.S. Open and forced her to withdraw from the French Open might have prevented her from competing at all in Australia if not for that extra bit of rest. Most participants were limited to leaving their hotels for five hours of training per day. More than 70 players were banned from leaving their rooms at all during that period because they potentially were exposed to the virus during the chartered flights that carried them from various spots in

the globe to Melbourne.

"Everyone experienced different challenges when it came to that period," three-time major semifinalist Johanna Konta said. "Some had it a lot more difficult than others, that's for sure."

The mental and physical tolls of that kind of lockdown certainly would be liable to affect anyone, athlete or otherwise.

"The players are just getting thrown off-guard a lot. I think it's going to demand a lot of patience and a lot of flexibility and who is going to really adjust and adapt the best," said Chris Evert, whose 18 major championships include the 1982 and

1984 Australian Opens.

"Players are so used to routines. They like to be in control. They're not in control," said Evert, now an ESPN analyst. "I mean, even Djokovic, who is like a control freak — just, you've got to throw everything to the wind and wake up every morning and just be ready to go with whatever is going to happen. It's not easy."

Because of that one positive COVID-19 test, more than 500 people associated with the Australian Open and its warmup tournaments were told to isolate until they tested negative. One day later, action resumed.

Australian Open tournament director Craig Tiley chalked it up as "just one of those additional challenges" and stated unequivocally: "We are starting on Monday."

"The players, from the feedback we're getting from them ... have come to accept the fact that now, with their travel around the world, the environment's different. And anything can happen," Tiley said. "Every day you wake up, it can be different. And I think they have gotten used to that."

The plan is to let in 30,000 spectators per day, about 50% of the usual crowds — and a big departure from the last Grand Slam tournament of 2020, the French Open, which had about 1,000 fans per day, and the U.S. Open, which did not allow any. □

Spink's name stripped from Hall of Fame award over racism

NEW YORK (AP) — The Baseball Writers' Association of America has voted to remove the name of J.G. Taylor Spink, former publisher of The Sporting News, from the award given annually by baseball's Hall of Fame for meritorious contributions to baseball writing. The BBWAA said Friday that 325 of 334 voters, 97%, had voted to remove the name following research into racism by Spink. The award voted on annually by BBWAA members will now be known as the BBWAA Career Excellence Award.

Spink was publisher of The Sporting News from 1914 until he died in 1962.

The change followed the October decision to remove the name of former baseball Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis from the annual Most Valuable Player Award plaque.

Proposals to rename the awards were made last July by Ken Rosenthal of The Athletic for the MVP award and Bruce Jenkins of the San Francisco Chronicle for the Spink Award.

In a story by The Associated Press

in June, former MVP winners Barry Larkin, Mike Schmidt and Terry Pendleton said they favored pulling Landis' name from the MVP award plaque because of concerns over his handling of Black players. The BBWAA announced in October that 89% of 311 voters had voted to remove Landis' name. Jenkins researched evidence of racism by Spink starting last summer, and The Sporting News endorsed the name change last month.

Senior writer Ryan Fagan wrote

then: "Spink was the publisher of the largest, most powerful baseball publication in the country for nearly half a century, and he used that position to strongly advocate against the integration of the sport."

Fagan wrote that Spink's Sporting News contained "racist language, ugly stereotypes and derogatory portrayals of Negro League players and other Black Americans during Spink's time as publisher, especially in the era before Jackie Robinson made his MLB debut in 1947." □

Defense could be decisive in Super Bowl of dynamic offenses



Buffalo Bills wide receiver Stefon Diggs is tackled by Kansas City Chiefs safety Tyrann Mathieu, left, after catching a pass during the second half of the AFC championship NFL football game, Sunday, Jan. 24, 2021, in Kansas City, Mo.

Associated Press

By **BARRY WILNER**
AP Pro Football Writer

Suggesting that defense could decide this Super Bowl might seem like heresy.

With Patrick Mahomes and the explosive Kansas City offense on one side, Tom Brady and Tampa Bay's resourceful attack on the other, expecting either D to be dominant or dangerous or definitive appears like folly.

Read on, though.

WHEN THE CHIEFS HAVE THE BALL

Having clearly established itself as a force whether Mahomes is throwing to All-Pros Travis Kelce and Tyreek Hill, an impressive group of other targets, or handing off to Clyde Edwards-Helaire — not to mention, the quarterback taking off himself — Kansas City excels at scoring quickly. And often.

So where would Tampa Bay have any chance of defending the speed demons and shifty targets? For one, the Bucs have the league's best linebacker corps: sack master Shaq Barrett, run stuffer Lavonte David, all-around standout Devin White. They are capable of at least giving Kelce, the sport's best tight end, some trouble.

The Bucs showed how strong their pass rush can be in last week's NFC championship victory over Green Bay.

They sacked Aaron Rodgers five times, bothered him a slew more,

and that was operating against a solid offensive line.

Mahomes has similar escapability to Rodgers, and is far more of a threat to flat out run the ball himself. Keeping him in the pocket and pressured is a key, and the Chiefs will be without starting left tackle Eric Fisher (Achilles tendon). Barrett, edge rusher Jason Pierre-Paul and inside presence Ndamukong Suh must be controlled by Kansas City.

With a strong pass rush, the Bucs can protect a secondary that makes big plays, but also can give them up. If safeties Antoine Winfield Jr., a rookie, and Jordan Whitehead are limited, that could spell trouble, and Chiefs touchdowns.

Carlton Davis, Jamel Dean and Sean Murphy-Bunting are the key cornerbacks trying to slow the KC express. No one on the Tampa defense can match the speed of Hill or Mecole Hardman.

WHEN THE BUCCANEERS HAVE THE BALL

If Tampa Bay is on offense in the final minutes in a tight game, it's surely time for the Chiefs to worry. There are only two ways to beat a Brady team in a Super Bowl. One is to outscore it in a shootout, as the Eagles did three years ago. The other is to mount consistent pressure up the middle and from the outside to make him throw before

he wants to or can get set. Remember, Brady was intercepted on three consecutive series in the NFC championship.

The onus for protecting him falls on a solid O-line featuring left guard Ali Marpet and rookie right tackle Tristan Wirfs. They must deal with Kansas City DT Chris Jones and DE Frank Clark, plus an assortment of linebackers and defensive backs coming after their quarterback on blitzes.

Brady won't be running around to extend plays the way Mahomes can, but he also will be getting the ball out of his hand quickly and, at times, reading the Chiefs' coverage before they even show it.

In Mike Evans, Chris Godwin and Scotty Miller, plus tight ends Rob Gronkowski and Cameron Brate, Brady has receivers he is comfortable with. While the Chiefs are exceptional at safety with All-Pro Tyrann Mathieu and Daniel Sorensen, cornerbacks Charvarius Ward, L'Jarius Sneed, Bashaud Breeland and Rashad Fenton aren't at that level.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The Bucs settled on Jaydon Mickens as the punt returner after several changes, mainly because of injuries. Signing Ryan Succop has been their best offseason decision and he has been reliable on field goals, though he missed five extra points. Punter Bradley Pinion has a

strong leg, but punt coverage has been problematic in the postseason.

Punt units have been a bit of an issue for KC. Hardman's muff against Buffalo was the latest in a string of questionable decisions. But he also had a return touchdown this season.

Harrison Butker, like Succop, is dynamic on field goals, less dependable on extra points. Rookie punter Tommy Townsend has done a solid job.

COACHING

Two 60-somethings who have defied the trend to hire young coaches, many of whom are in their first go-arounds as the top guy. Andy Reid and Bruce Arians, both offensive masterminds who have contributed deeply to the fabric of pro football in the 2000s, are play-to-win types rather than the play-not-to-lose coaches who, inevitably, wind up losing.

Reid's Chiefs have the most innovative attack the NFL has seen since perhaps the Rams' Greatest Show on Turf. Credit OC Eric Bieniemy for some of that, but Reid always has tested the limits. DC Steve Spagnuolo is equally as aggressive, and his best teams always bring a potent pass rush. Ask Brady about how his 2007 unbeaten Patriots were manhandled by Spags' D in the Super Bowl.

Arians leaves the defense to coordinator Todd Bowles, and that arrangement has especially been effective the last two months. Brady has become more comfortable with the offensive schemes and OC Byron Leftwich, with many of the QB's favorite plays incorporated in game plans.

INTANGIBLES

Kansas City seeks to become the first repeat champion since New England (led by Brady) in the 2003 and 2004 seasons.

Reid would solidify his already likely Hall of Fame credentials with a victory. Bieniemy would further display why he deserves a head coaching job.

Brady, of course, goes after a seventh ring in his 10th Super Bowl. He has already proven how overwhelmingly responsible he was for the Patriots' dominance, but that actually drives him even harder to equal such achievements with his new team.

Oh yeah, there's this: The Super Bowl is being played on the Buccaneers' home field, a first in this 55th edition of the game. The stadium won't be filled to anything near capacity, but familiar surroundings certainly can't hurt. □